

not take action. This is a vitally important program to the State of Oregon, and to America's children. We must take action to protect this funding.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program, created in 1997, has always had bi-partisan support. Shortly after being elected to the United States Senate in 1996, I strongly supported the creation of this program. I knew that Congress had an opportunity to reach out to millions of low-income children and provide health care coverage. Working with my colleagues and friends, including Senators ORRIN HATCH and EDWARD KENNEDY, in the development of the bipartisan proposal was a pleasure.

Since 1997, we have all continued to work together, members from both sides of the aisle, to extend funding and make improvements to the program. This year should be no different. I know it is an election year, a presidential election year in fact, and that often creates a dynamic where politics can overwhelm policy. However, I am hopeful that we can once again triumph over partisanship and pass legislation that will intervene and prevent the expiration of \$1.1 billion in unspent S-CHIP funding. I am confident that if both sides are reasonable and willing to work together we can accomplish this goal by the time Congress recesses on October 8.

As we prepare to take action on a bill, we need to consider that no one member or group of members have all of the answers; that nobody has a monopoly on protecting America's children. We all work every day to protect our Nation's children and ensure that those who come from low-income families receive the nutritional, housing, education and health care assistance that they need. This time should be no different.

I look forward to working with Senators HATCH and KENNEDY, the creators of this remarkable program; President Bush, a strong advocate for our nation's children; Leader FRIST, Chairman GRASSLEY and others to extend funding for this important program.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 5149) was read the third time and passed.

TO PROVIDE AN EXTENSION OF HIGHWAY, HIGHWAY SAFETY, MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY, TRANSIT, AND OTHER PROGRAMS FUNDED OUT OF THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND PENDING ENACTMENT OF A LAW REAUTHORIZING THE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to consideration of H.R. 5183, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5183) to provide an extension of highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a law reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded with the consideration of the bill.

TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today is a disappointing day in the history of Congress. Exactly one year ago, Congress missed the deadline for passing a full transportation reauthorization bill that would fund the Federal portion of highway, transit, and safety projects around the country for the next six years. The fact that we missed this self-imposed, legislative deadline will come as no surprise to those who follow progress on Capitol Hill, but it is deeply troubling.

Because of the unwillingness of several of my colleagues, Congress is once again forced to use a temporary extension of last year's funding as an inadequate short-term fix to a very real problem. This is an unacceptable outcome and I hope my colleagues will agree we need to pass a fully-funded 6-year bill immediately.

Just as national defense and judicial review are core functions performed by the United States Government to ensure security and fairness for all citizens, transportation infrastructure funding is one of the primary responsibilities of the Federal Government. Adequate transportation infrastructure that is safe and affordable helps facilitate intrastate and interstate trade and provides the physical backbone of our economy. This is certainly a burden that the Federal Government needs to bear on behalf of its citizens. While it was extremely disappointing that Congress allowed the September 30, 2003 deadline to pass without a resolution to this problem, it is simply inexcusable for us to have not successfully addressed this critical need for over a year. I ask my colleagues to commit to coming together before this year's end to pass a six-year reauthorization bill.

I am not naive, I understand that there are always reasons behind the in-

ability for Congress to pass important legislation. And this case is no exception. Over the last year, I have heard the excuses from the legislative and executive branches of government, both Republicans and Democrats. Some argue the transportation funding proposals being debated cost too much; others say they don't provide enough funding to States; still others say the formulas being used to distribute the money are inherently flawed and do not return as much of the Highway Trust Fund proceeds as their State contributes. All of these excuses have merit and need to be worked out to the satisfaction of lawmakers prior to enactment, but it is rational for a person to believe, as I do, that given the high priority transportation funding plays in each and every State, Congress should have reached a compromise by now two years after work on this reauthorization initially began.

As I travel throughout Utah, meeting with the good citizens of my home State, the most frequently-requested issue I am asked to address is the issue of transportation. Every week, Utahns remind me of the constant need we have to maintain our roadways, increase our transit capacity, and provide alternative routes along main arteries in the cities. I certainly understand why this issue is so important to my constituents. Over the last ten years, Utah has seen a dramatic increase in the number of residents who call "The Beehive State" home. In fact, there are only three states in the United States who have had larger proportional increases in their populations over the past ten years and all of them border the State of Utah. There is tremendous population growth all over the West, underscoring the critical need we have for a steady increase in transportation funding right now.

The State of Utah receives over \$200 million per year in highway funding which goes toward the planning and execution of highway expansion projects. Under the Senate-proposed version of this bill, that number would go to nearly \$300 million per year. That increase goes a long way, not all the way, but a long way toward making several important transportation projects a reality. Projects that otherwise might not come to fruition without a federal commitment.

In stating the amount of funding Utah receives, I do not want to give the impression that this Federal funding comes to States without them having to do their part. All of the Federal funds in this bill have a State matching component as well. States spend millions, even billions, of State dollars on transportation every year. Demand for more and better transportation alternatives in the State of Utah have become so severe that State lawmakers are now seriously considering raising the State fuel tax in order to pay for their portion of these projects. Although I hate to see any tax increases, I applaud the efforts of local lawmakers to deal with our transportation